STOP DELAYING. START DOING. FINISH STRONG.

STOP. START. FINISH.

BREAK THE CYCLE. BUILD MOMENTUM. ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS.

A PRACTICAL WORKBOOK TO KILL PROCRASTINATION

STOP EXCUSES
IDENTIFY WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK

START ACTION
BUILD HABITS THAT DRIVE YOU FORWARD

FINISH WHAT MATTERS
COMPLETE TASKS AND ACHIEVE GOALS

SET GOALS | PLAN SMARTER | STAY FOCUSED | TRACK PROGRESS

WORKBOOK. EXERCISES. TEMPLATES. REAL RESULTS.

PROCRASTINATION WORKSHEET
(NOTES TO MYSELF)

Self Assessment Exercise:

Irrational Thoughts	- - -
Physiological Symptoms of Stress	Map out on a Body Map: - - - - - -
Strategies & Ideas for Change	- - -

THE MONKEY TRAP

Chain a hollowed-out coconut to a stake. Ensure that the coconut has some rice inside which can be seen through a small hole. The hole must be just big enough so that the monkey can put his hand in, but too small for his hand to come out after he/she has grabbed the rice. Tempted by the rice, the monkey reaches in and is suddenly trapped. He/she is not able to see that it is his own fist that traps him, his own desire for the rice. He rigidly holds on to the rice, because he values it. He cannot let go and by doing so retain his freedom. So the trap works and the monkey captured.

THE RICE I HOLD ON TO THAT KEEPS ME TRAPPED IN PROCRASTINATION IS?

Sentence Stems

Provide 5 or 6 answers for each of the following sentence stems:

1. *If I didn't procrastinate I . . .*

2. If I didn't struggle with procrastination how would my life be different? What would I do differently?

3. If I stopped procrastinating what new problems or situations would I have to face that I don't have to contend with now?

Reasons Why People Procrastinate

THE "BIG FIVE"

1.Fear of Failure	You cannot control other people's responses to your work; overvaluing these responses can create anxiety: - **Perfectionism**: having unreachable standards will discourage you from pursuing a task - **Double Insurance**: procrastination can be a way of protecting our self esteem • ie. If I don't do well on an exam, it's because I didn't study, if I do well, I'm a genius because I didn't study
2. Fear of Success	Afraid of what might happen if we were successful
3. Fear of Losing Control	When feeling out of control, a person may develop a rebellious attitude in order to gain a greater sense of control. - ie. A professor wants an assignment in by a certain date, and I ***chose*** to submit it 2 weeks later
4. Fear of Separation	Afraid that successful completion of work could pull us away from others.
5. Fear of Attachment	Afraid that successful completion of work could draw others too close.

Others:

- Fear of unknown
- Fear of change
- Low motivation
- Lack of assertion
- Peer influence
- Lack of relevance
- Lack of self-confidence
- Uncertainty of what is expected
- Acceptance of another's goals
- Aversive nature of the task
- Habit
- Excitement of last minute work
- Beliefs that time pressures produce best work
- Low frustration tolerance
- Difficulty making decisions
- Dependency and help-seeking
- Laziness
- Poor study habits
- Poor time management
- Learned helplessness
- Uncertainty about career objectives
- Inability to handle the task

NOTE: Mental health issues (e.g. serious depression and anxiety) may also contribute to the habit of procrastination. Medical consultation is advised under these circumstances.

THE PROCRASTINATOR'S CODE

(from Burka and Yuen)

I must be perfect.

Everything I do should go easily and without effort.

It is safer to do nothing than to take a risk and fail.

I should have no limitations.

If it's not done right, it's not worth doing at all.

I must avoid being challenged.

If I succeed, someone will get hurt.

If I do well this time, I must always do well.

Following someone else's rules means I'm giving in and not in control.

I can't afford to let go of everything or anyone.

There is a right answer, and I'll wait until I find it.

If I expose my real self, people won't like me.

I will not put in my best effort so if I do poorly I will be able to tell myself that if I worked harder, I could have done better.

Behavioural Strategies forProcrastination Intervention

"A little neglect may breed mischief: for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost."

Benjamin Franklin

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Was there a time when you didn't procrastinate, or was it less severe?
2. What were you doing different at that time?
3. Could you do that again? Could you do more of that?
4. In trying to resolve your procrastination, what have you tried and found helpful?

GUIDELINES FOR GOALSETTING:

Goals should be…	• Meaningful & Desired • Believable, Realistic and Achievable • Concrete, Specific and Clearly Defined • Stated in the Positive • Vividly Imagined and Internalized • In writing • Measurable • Prioritized

PRIORITIZING:

Step 1	-Listall of the tasks that need to be done
Step 2	-Break the list into **3** groups: • **H** – High Priority – needs to be done right away • **M** – Medium Priority – needs to be done, but not immediately • **L** - Low Priority – not essential, but things I'd like to get done
Step 3	- Put a letter (H, M, L) beside each item on your list - Within each category, assign a number for the order you will tackle these items

TIME MANAGEMENT & SELF MOTIVATION:

Try an 'Un-Schedule':

1. Write down all the activities that you know you will be doing in a schedule for the week
    - -Organize your activities in ½hour blocks
    - -ie. Class, commuting time, meals, groceries, laundry, socializing, exercise, etc.
    - -This schedule does not include what you ***should*** be doing, your behavioural goal (ie. studying for an exam, researching or writing a paper)

2. Look over this schedule and ask yourself if anything is missing
    - ie. Exercise, fun, TV time, etc.

3. Once all activities are recorded, the blank spaces show the maximum time that you can use to work towards your goal.

4. Record what you actually do with the ½ hour blocks.
    - If you are aware you are procrastinating, record it

5. As you work towards your goal, use the Un-Schedule to record your progress

6. Once you have done a ½ hour of work towards your goal, block off the corresponding ½ block on your schedule
    - You may want to use a different colour so these blocks stand out

7. At the end of each week, add up all the coloured blocks and celebrate how much time you spent working towards your goal

Benefits of the Un-Schedule

1. You see how much time is already committed and how much time you actually have to work towards your goals.
2. At the end of the week you can look back and see where your time actually went.
3. When you record progress after you have made it, you focus on your accomplishments, which is more encouraging.
4. The coloured blocks serve as a reward and gives satisfaction to see what you have achieved.
5. This is a helpful exercise in self-monitoring, an effective tool to overcome procrastination.

Master Weekly Un-Schedule

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
6:30 am							
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							
11:00							
11:30							
12:00 pm							
12:30							
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8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							
11:00							
11:30							
12:00 am							
Hours:							

Total Hours WorkedTowards Goal:_____

CONTRACTING & ACCOUNTABILITY:

I _____, do solemnly swear on this _____ day of _____, 2026, to _____ _____.

And when I do this I will reward myself with_____ _____.

Signed _____ Date _____/_____/_____

Witnessed _____ Date _____/_____/_____

SELF-REWARD:

Rewarding yourself is more effective than punishing yourself.

RELAXATION:

Too much stress and anxiety can reduce your ability to concentrate and become so distracting that you can't move towards the accomplishment of your goal.

CONCLUSION:

1. Experiment with these strategies to find out what ones might work for you.
2. Don't try to put them all into place at once. You would probably become overwhelmed and get discouraged.
3. Continue to do what works, discard what doesn't, and try something new.
4. Be patient, give yourself time to change. You are not going to eradicate procrastination from your life overnight.
5. Celebrate the small steps.

101 Time Management & Time Saver Strategies

1. Clarify your values
2. Set goals based on your values
3. Develop action plans based on goals
4. Record and evaluate how you spend your time
5. Ensure that daily, weekly & term goals are congruent with your values
6. Combine activities
7. Watch out for the time wasters
8. Have little tasks at hand
9. Be flexible
10. Review lecture notes soon after your lecture
11. Review lecture notes throughout the term
12. Don't rely on cramming for exams
13. Spread memory work out over the term
14. Remember – work expands to fill time available
15. 20% of what you do yields 80% of the results
16. 80% of what you do yields 20% of the results
17. Let your subconscious work for you – start papers and creative work early

18. Have a note pad at all times
19. Take learning skill workshops
20. Have a purpose for everything you do
21. Define your objectives
22. Set priorities
23. Plan
24. Write down daily goals in order of priority
25. Set goals that are specific
26. Set goals that are measurable
27. Set goals that are acceptable to you
28. Set goals that are realistic
29. Set goals that include a specified time frame for completion

30. Make "To Do" lists
31. Work on top priorities
32. Break down big tasks into short projects
33. Do the hard tasks first
34. Eliminate tasks you do not have to do yourself
35. Complete one task before starting another
36. Delegate
37. Allow enough time for each task
38. Allow extra time for the unexpected
39. Avoid busyness
40. Allow time for family, friends and yourself
41. Use calendars: term, week, daily
42. Set deadlines
43. Consolidate discretionary time in blocks
44. Do creative work where you will not be disturbed

45. Communicate clearly the first time
46. Get feedback on your communications
47. Do not over schedule
48. Know your limitations
49. Use the telephone or email
50. Group phone calls, emails together
51. Return calls at a fixed time
52. Keep time filler tasks by the phone
53. Keep a clean desk
54. Do not waste other people's time
55. Plan meetings
56. Direct meetings purposefully
57. Start meetings on time
58. Keep meetings on agenda
59. Time limit agenda items
60. End meetings on time
61. Handle mail once
62. Throw out what you will not read
63. Use a tickler system to remind you of due dates
64. Let your secretary handle appointments
65. Fix hours for appointments
66. Go to the other person's room or office
67. Meet outside of your office
68. Block interruptions of appointments
69. Do not trust your memory – write it down
70. Develop a good file system
71. Let someone hold you accountable
72. Get exercise
73. Schedule in more fun
74. Take a day off each week
75. Learn to say "NO" more often
76. Take time to nurture your spirituality
77. Remember, today may be your last day
78. Take your time
79. Accept responsibility for your time
80. Strive for a balanced life
81. Use the little windows of time
82. Group related tasks
83. Use your peak times wisely
84. Avoid procrastinating
85. Plan tasks before starting them
86. Nurture self-discipline & gratification delay
87. Nurture your concentration ability
88. Learn memory enhancement techniques
89. Develop a procedure manual for future reference

90. Learn from failures & mistakes, then forget them
91. Review long and short-term goals often
92. Eliminate tasks not related to your goals
93. Eliminate tasks that interfere with balance
94. Reward yourself for effective time management
95. Use post-it notes!
96. Use your day-timer
97. Give yourself time to relax each day
98. Plan ahead to ward off typical distractions
99. Learn to make decisions
100. Wherever you go, there you are, therefore, be all there

101. When you finish something, add it to your "to do" list, then cross it off – it looks good and feels great!

Relaxation Methods

The body and the mind are interconnected, asaresult, becoming relaxed physically helps us to relax mentally, and becoming relaxed mentallyhelps us to relax physically.

Concentrate on Your Breathing

Anxiety can lead to shallow, fast, or irregular breathing. Likewise, shallow, quick, or irregular breathing can increase physical sensations of anxiety. Those breathing patterns can create an imbalance of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body and brain, heightening physical indicators often associated with anxiety and, in turn, increasing our cognitive interpretations that what we are experiencing is due to anxiety.

Controlled Breathing Strategies:

Practice this method of breathing for at least 4 minutes because that's roughly how long it takes to restore the optimal balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide.

- Breathe in slowly and deeply to a count of **4**, hold the breath for a count of **2**, and breathe out for a count of **8.**
- With one hand on your upper chest, and the other on your stomach; the hand on your stomach should move in and out as you breathe, the hand on your chest should remain stationary.
- Breathe either through your mouth or nose; whichever is more comfortable.
- Breathe gently, slowly, and deeply and avoid taking big gulps of air.
- Practice this method of controlled breathing a few times each day in situations in which you feel anxious

Relax Your Muscles

Tense muscles can be a result of anxiety as well as a cause of anxiety. Although people carry muscle tension in different areas of their bodies, most people report increased levels of relaxation and decreased levels of physical tension and anxiety on completing the progressive muscle relaxation exercise.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Strategies

- Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique where the body's major muscle groups are alternately tensed and relaxed
- The process can proceed from head to feet or feet to head
- Tense and relax the muscles in the forehead, eyes, jaw, neck, shoulders, upper back, biceps, forearms, hands, abdomen, groin, hips, buttocks, thighs, calves, and feet
- Tense the first muscle group for **5** seconds and then relax for **10-15** seconds; repeat, and do the same for the next muscle group until all muscle groups have been tensed and relaxed

Relax Through Visualization

Visualization (or imagery) methods are techniques for learning to relax and reduce anxiety. Imagery involves actively visualizing scenes that are tranquil and relaxing for you.

Visualization Strategies

- The scenes you imagine can be scenes that may or may not exist. The important thing is that they are tranquil and relaxing for you
- The specific scene is less important than how the image makes you feel
- The more senses you incorporate in your image, the more relaxing the
- visualization is likely to be
  By imagining smells, sounds, tastes, and tactile sensations that go along with
- your image, you will increase your ability to relax
  ie. – If you imagine yourself walking along a tree-lined mountain path, notice the bird songs, the light through the trees, the fragrance and colour of the leaves, and the feel of the breeze on your skin.

Some of the material above has been adapted from Geenberger & Padesky's "Mind Over Mood"

Five Finger Relaxation Technique

Begin this relaxation method by closing your eyes and using the deep breathing method.

After a few deep breaths:

Step 1	- Touch your thumb to your first finger and think back to a time when your body felt a deep healthy fatigue (ie. After a long hike/bike ride) - Remember the feeling of your muscles relaxing and your heart beating slowly
Step 2	- Touch your thumb to your second finger and think back to a time when you had a big achievement in your life or when you had finished an important project - Feel the pride of accomplishing something important to you
Step 3	- Touch your thumb to your third finger and think back to the nicest compliment you have ever received. - Feel the warmth and happiness from the compliment
Step 4	- Touch your thumb to your fourth finger and go back to the most beautiful place you've been to or can imagine. - Allow the beauty to soak in. Feel safe and secure and let all the tension and stress go. Reflect and enjoy for a while.

Practicing this exercise everyday for a few weeks will set up an automatic relaxation process that you can activate whenever you begin to notice the stress or anxiety starting. Simply touch each finger to your thumb, or all four at the same time, and feel yourself relax. Do this several times each day to create brief "time-outs".

Some of the material above has been adapted from Davis et al.'s "The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook".

"The Anxious-Afraid Procrastinator"

- The "anxious-afraid" procrastination style is characterized by an individual feeling overwhelmed and pressured by the tasks or relationships at hand.

- The "anxious-afraid" procrastinator may:

  Feel pressure to succeed
  Be a perfectionist in work endeavors
  Be unrealistic about time
  Be uncertain about their goals
  Be dissatisfied with their achievements
  Be sensitive to criticism and failure
  Be fearful of relational change

- This type of person often maintains high levels of efficiency and productivity; however, easily becomes over-stressed and over-worked and is highly susceptible to procrastination.

- Attempts to relax and avoid pressure often give rise to more guilt, pressure and apprehension.

- When the focus is on relationships, the individual will likely avoid completing tasks that threaten to change the desired levels of intimacy/dependency in their relationship.

Characteristics	- Hardworking, high achieving, and competent - Fearful of being judged and falling short of expectations - Feelings of guilt, inadequacy, incompetence, inferiority, or superiority - Critical of self and others - Focused on the future – worried about outcomes - Seeks a lot of advice from others and hesitates making decisions on their own - May be fearful of intimacy in relationships
Irrational Beliefs	- "My worth as a person is determined by my ability and achievements." - "I must always do well and be approved of by others." - "I must be in control and resist control by someone else – I can't risk exposure and failure." - "I must maintain and reach my unrealistic goals and expectations."

Summary:

Trying harder or becoming more organized does not often work for this type of procrastinator. It only increases the pressure and unpleasant feelings about the task to be done. We must find ways to reduce the fear of failure.

Explore and Journal about:

Your Fear of Failing:	- Identify alternate plans for success in case your original plan doesn't work - Use positive self-talk - Replace the thoughts which lead you to procrastinate with more healthy and productive ones (ie. I must…have to…--I'd like to…choose to…)
The Tasks that you Avoid:	**Ask Yourself:** - What excuses do you use? - What were your thoughts and feelings? - What did you do instead of your work? - What was the outcome?
Your Worries and Self Doubts:	**Ask Yourself:** - What is the worst possible outcome? - What would I do if the worst happened? - What skills and strengths do I have that would help me cope? - How will I forgive myself for making a mistake?
Your Relational Fears:	**Ask Yourself:** - How do I feel about intimacy? - What are my intimacy boundaries? - How will I feel if my intimacy boundaries are crossed?
Helpful Strategies:	- Keep your work and play time separate - Schedule and make your playtime mandatory - Identify your unrealistic goals and replace them with more balanced and realistic ones - Practice relaxation exercises

"REC" Your Thoughts and Change Your Mood

Start by making a 6 column chart:

Titlecolumns from left to right:

ie.

Event	Thought(s)	Feeling	Evaluation	Change	Feeling
-past -present -future	-words -images -memories	-identify -rate	-evaluatethe thought	-alternate -morebalanced	-rate again

The following explains how to use the chart as a means of changing your mood by Recording, Evaluating, and Changing your thinking:

Feeling – The easiest place to start is with column 3

- Try to identify the distressing emotion with **one** word -

Rate the intensity of the feeling ona **0-100** scale

(0 =absence of the feeling; 100 = most intense feeling)

Thought(s) - Try to identifythethought(s)thatproceeded/accompaniedthe emotion

- The thoughtcouldbeparticularwords,images,memories,beliefs, convictions, rules, interpretations, or meanings
- What went through your mind? What were you saying to yourself?

Event

- Were you remembering a past event, interpreting a current one, or reflecting on a future one?
- Try to clarify the situational factors by asking yourself:

What,,happened?	Or	What do I think is going to happen?
Who was I with?	Or	Who do I think I will be with? What
What was I doing?	Or	do I think I will be doing? When do
When did it happen?	Or	I think it will happen? Where do I
Where was I?	Or	think I will be?

Evaluation - When filling in the 4th column there are three effective ways to evaluate our thoughts

Weighing the cost
Weighing the evidence
Weighing the pattern

These different approaches will help you decide whether you need to modify your beliefs.

Find the one(s) that work for you:

a) Weighing the Cost - We can determine the cost by evaluating the positive and negative effects of our thinking.

List the Positive Effects	Ask Yourself: • What positive effects does this thought have on me and those close to me? • How does it help me? • How does it promote well-being? • What does it do for me? • What does it accomplish? • Does it protect me from something dangerous? • What evidence is there that it actually has these positive effects?
List the Negative Effects	Ask Yourself: • What negative effects does this thought have on me and those close to me? • How does it harm me? • How does it impede my well-being
Determine the Costs	Ask Yourself: • How do I feel about the price I am paying to think this way? • Do I want to continue to pay it? • How do I feel about the price others are paying when I think this way? • Do I want them to continue paying this price? • Do I want to modify my thinking so it is less costly and distressing?

At this point you might find yourself saying:

"I realize it's costing me and others a lot for me to embrace this belief, but it happens to be true!"

Okay then, you might want to go to the next section and weigh the evidence for its veracity.

b) Weighing the Evidence - Ask yourself the following questions:

- What evidence exists to support this belief?
- What evidence exists that would contradict this belief?
- Have I had any experiences that show that this belief is not completely true *all* the time?
- If my best friend knew I believed this, what would she or he say to me? What evidence might she or he point out that would suggest that this belief is not always 100% true?
- If I went to an expert to get an opinion on this matter, what would she or he say?

After asking these questions, you can further weigh the evidence for and against your belief by testing it out. This can be done through observation, conducting experiments, or doing some research (as in asking experts or surveying others).

Try an observational exercise, start by looking for one piece of evidence each day ***that is contrary to*** your belief. Try this for one week. In the second week look for two pieces of evidence each day. After this kind of observation ask yourself if your belief needs to be modified.

c) Weighing the Pattern - Is my thinking an example of unrealistic thinking that can cause people trouble?

Overgeneralization	- From one isolated event you make a general, universal rule (ie. "you failed once, you'll always fail")
Global Labeling	- You automatically use negative labels to describe yourself (ie. "I am such a loser")
Filtering	- You selectively pay attention to the negative and disregard the positive
Polarized Thinking	- You lump things into absolute, black and white categories, with no middle ground
Self-Blame	- You consistently blame yourself for things that may not really be your fault
Personalization	- You assume that everything has something to do with you, and you negatively compare yourself to others
Mind Reading	- You assume that others don't like you, are angry with you, don't care about you, etc. without real evidence that your assumptions are correct
Control Fallacies	- You either feel that you have total responsibility for everybody and everything, or feel that you have no control
Emotional Reasoning	- You assume that things are the way you feel about them
Disqualifying the Positive	- You reject positive experiences by insisting that they don't count for some reason, then maintain a negative belief that is contradicted by your everyday experiences
Magnification or Minimization	- You exaggerate or discount the importance of things
Catastrophic Thinking	- You expect, even visualize disaster. You undergo "what if?" thoughts constantly
Shoulding	- You have a list of ironclad rules about how you and other people should act

(Some of this material is from "Self-Esteem" by McKay & Fanning and from "Feeling Good" by David Burns)

Change
- On the 5th column, you may find yourself wanting to modify your belief after your evaluation
- Look for alternate explanations of the event that are less costly, more accurate, and less troubling than the original interpretation
- Write your alternate belief on the chart
- Helpful questions:

Is there a different way of interpreting this situation that is less costly, more accurate, and less troubling?
If someone I cared about was in this situation, with these thoughts and this information, how would I suggest they view the situation?
If my best friend, or someone who really cares about me, knew I was thinking this thought, what would s/he say to me?

Once you come up with an alternate belief, think how you might test it out. Give it a test drive, try it out for several weeks and see how it feels. Also, ask yourself what behaviours would be consistent with this belief. Try one or two of these out as well.

Feeling
- On the last column, once you have written an alternate way of viewing the situation, rate the original feeling again
- How has that rating changed?

Use thought records as often as you can.

- With practice you won't require the formality of the chart; you'll find that you are able to go through the process just in your mind, wherever you happen to be.
- You'll become increasingly adept at seeing the connection between life's events, your thoughts, and your feelings.
- You'll be empowered to evaluate and alter your thinking, which will result in a more positive emotional existence.

Adapted from Greenberger & Padesky's "Mind Over Mood"

"REC" Your Thoughts & Change Your Mood Chart

Event	Thought(s)	Feeling	Evaluation	Change	Feeling